

Driving licence: QUESTIONS – ANSWERS

The Community model driving licence

1. Do I have to exchange my old driving licence for a new Community model licence?
2. What are the effects of exchanging my driving licence for a Community model?
3. Do I have to carry my driving licence with me whenever I am driving?
4. Are national categories recorded on my licence valid in the other countries?
5. May I apply for a licence in the form of a plastic card?

Mutual recognition

6. I already have a driving licence issued by a Member State and I am taking up residence in another Member State. Will my licence be recognised?
7. Will old driving licence models still be recognised?
8. I have changed my normal residence. Does the Member State have the right to apply more restrictive validity rules or medical examinations?

The vehicle categories

9. I already have a driving licence issued by a Member State and would like to obtain an additional category. How should I proceed?
10. By exchanging my old driving licence for a new one, will I be able to continue driving the same vehicles?
11. I am driving a vehicle for which I hold a category B driving licence (< 3500 kg). What type of trailer may I attach to this vehicle without having to obtain a category B+E driving licence?
12. May Member States impose more restrictive criteria for the issue of certain categories?
13. Is it possible to drive a category B1 vehicle with a category A1 or A licence?
14. Is it possible to drive a category A1 vehicle with a B licence?
15. May I drive a heavy motorcycle without restrictions?

The issue of driving licences

16. I do not have a driving licence and wish to obtain one. What are the formalities to be carried out?
17. I am a student and settle in another country of the European Union to continue my studies. I wish to obtain my driving licence. Where should I apply?
18. I wish to obtain a category B licence, what medical requirements do I have to satisfy?
19. I want to become a bus driver; what medical requirements do I have to satisfy?
20. How is the driving test conducted?
21. Is it possible to have two driving licences issued by different Member States?

The renewal of driving licences

22. My licence is about to expire; where do I have to apply for renewal?
23. I am from the Netherlands and have a limited-duration licence of category B. I am moving to France where such driving licences are issued for an unlimited period. My Dutch licence is about to expire. What will be the period of validity of my new driving licence?
24. I am Belgian holding a licence with an unlimited validity. I am establishing my normal residence in the Netherlands. Will the validity of my driving licence become limited?
25. Having established my normal residence in another Member State, can I renew the driving licence in my country of origin?
26. Do I have to undergo a medical examination to renew my licence when it expires?
27. When renewing in another Member State, do I have to produce a translation of my driving licence?
28. When renewing, do I retain my acquired rights?

Theft or loss of a driving licence

29. You already hold a driving licence issued by a Member State, but you lose it or it is stolen.

Withdrawal, cancellation and suspension of driving licences

30. Your driving licence is withdrawn in the country of residence
31. Your driving licence is withdrawn in a state other than the state of residence.

Minimum ages

32. Are there any derogations from the age limit of 18 years for driving a category B vehicle?
33. Are category B licences issued to holders under 18 recognised by other Member States?

Situations relating to third countries (outside the EU)

34. You have a driving licence issued by a country located outside the European Union.
35. You hold an international driving licence.

1. Do I have to exchange my old driving licence for a new Community model licence?

No, the old national driving licences remain valid until the period of validity expires. However, it is compulsory to exchange the driving licence before the expiry of the validity period. The period of validity is indicated on your driving licence but can also be determined by the legislation of the Member State where you live, whatever is shorter. It is also possible to exchange it earlier by making a specific request. You will then be issued with a new Community model licence with categories corresponding to those which were recorded on the old model.

2. What are the effects of exchanging my driving licence for a Community model?

There are no changes either with regard to your rights, or with regard to mutual recognition, except in very special areas. However, holding a new Community model licence will facilitate the recognition of your rights and proceedings with administrative bodies in your country of residence.

3. Do I have to carry my driving licence with me whenever I am driving?

This question falls within the national competence of the Member States. However, when travelling to another country it is strongly recommended to have it with you since this is compulsory in the majority of Member States.

4. Are national categories recorded on my licence valid in the other countries?

Even if national categories appear on the driving licence, they are not harmonised yet by Community law. They must not be confused with the harmonised optional sub-categories (A1, B1, C1, C1+E, D1 and D1+E) which are mutually recognised in the event of change of country of normal residence. A national category may, for example, be a category T (tractor) which corresponds neither to a harmonised Community category, nor to a sub-category. In this case, the Member State in which one wishes to exchange the driving licence is not bound to recognise the national category and might not be recorded on the licence.

5. May I apply for a licence in the form of a plastic card?

Member States may choose between the plastic card model and the paper model. Citizens wishing to exchange their driving licence cannot choose between the two Community models. They will be given the model chosen by their Member State of residence.

6. I already have a driving licence issued by a Member State and I am taking up residence in another Member State. Will my licence be recognised?

According to Article 1(2) of Directive 91/439/EEC, the licence must be recognised in the host Member State. Therefore, you are no longer obliged to exchange it if your normal residence is henceforth in a Member State other than that which issued your driving licence.

However you have to be aware that, if your licence has been issued in exchange of a driving licence of a third country, Member States are not obliged to recognise such a licence. It is necessary to contact the competent national authority in order to determine whether the licence is recognized.

7. Will old driving licence models still be recognised?

Yes, the old driving licence models have to be mutually recognised by the Member States. Despite Directive 91/439/EEC having established a principle of mutual recognition of licences, the periods of validity of driving licences are not harmonised by Community legislation. This means that a very large number of different driving licences (more than 110 models) are still valid and circulating in the countries of the Union and of the European Economic Area. The majority do not resemble the Community model.

8. I have changed my normal residence. Does the Member State have the right to apply more restrictive validity rules or medical examinations?

Article 1.3 of Directive 91/439/EEC enables Member States to apply the same periods of validity and the same frequency of medical examinations for holders of driving licences issued by another Member State and having taken up normal residence in their territory as are applied to holders of national licences. The new period of validity is to be applied with effect from taking up residence. For determining the applicable validity period you are advised to consult the comparative view of validity periods in part I, section B.1. of the [Commission Interpretative Communication on Community driver licensing](#), (which has been published on 28 March 2002) **and** the local issuing authorities in your country of residence.

The vehicle categories

[▲top](#)

9. I already have a driving licence issued by a Member State and would like to obtain an additional category. How should I proceed?

You should submit your request to the competent authority of the state where you have your normal residence. Your original licence will be exchanged at the time of obtaining the new category.

10. By exchanging my old driving licence for a new one, will I be able to continue driving the same vehicles?

In case an old licence is exchanged for a new one or in the event of a duplicate being issued (in the event of loss or deterioration), the categories validated on the new model are mostly identical with those on the old ones. You are entitled to drive the same categories of vehicles as before.

11. I am driving a vehicle for which I hold a category B driving licence (< 3500 kg). What type of trailer may I attach to this vehicle without having to obtain a category B+E driving licence?

The category B driving licence is sufficient for:

- motor vehicles with a maximum authorized mass not exceeding 3 500 kilograms and having not more than eight seats in addition to the driver's seat; motor vehicles in this category may be combined with a trailer having a maximum authorized mass which does not exceed 750 kilograms;
- combinations of a tractor vehicle in category B and a trailer, where the maximum authorized mass of the combination does not exceed 3 500 kilograms and the maximum authorized mass of the trailer does not exceed the unladen mass of the tractor vehicles;

A B+E driving licence is required for all other combinations (of a vehicle with a MAM limited to 3 500 kilograms and a trailer) than those mentioned above.

The following table gives some examples of the kind of driving licence requested in different situations:

Category B vehicle					
Unladen mass	MAM	MAM of the trailer	MAM of the combination	Driving licence required	Comments
1025 kg	1450 kg	850 kg	2300 kg	B	Unladen mass of the towing vehicle > MAM trailer and MAM of combination < 3500 kg
890 kg	1375 kg	925 kg	2300 kg	B+E	Unladen mass of the towing vehicle < MAM trailer; MAM trailer > 750 kg
1875 kg	2955 kg	745 kg	3700 kg	B	MAM trailer < 750 kg
1875 kg	2850 kg	850 kg	3700 kg	B+E	MAM trailer > 750 kg and MAM of combination > 3500 kg

12. May Member States impose more restrictive criteria for the issue of certain categories?

For category A1, Directive 91/439/EEC stipulates that Member States can impose additional restrictive standards.

13. Is it possible to drive a category B1 vehicle with a category A1 or A licence?

Member States may grant this entitlement but it is valid on national territory only.

14. Is it possible to drive a category A1 vehicle with a B licence?

Member States may grant this entitlement but it is valid on national territory only.

15. May I drive a heavy motorcycle without restrictions?

Normally, two years prior experience is required to drive a heavy motorcycle. However, this may not be required if the candidate is at least 21 years old, subject to the candidate's passing a specific test of skills and behaviour (Member States are free to decide whether they wish to grant this so-called "direct access").

16. I do not have a driving licence and wish to obtain one. What are the formalities to be carried out?

You have to meet several conditions:

- You are required to have your normal residence in the Member State in which you apply.
- You must pass theory and practical tests.
- You must satisfy the medical standards (physical and mental fitness).
- You must meet the minimum age conditions according to the category of vehicle desired.
- You cannot hold more than one driving licence issued by a Member State, even if it has been suspended or withdrawn.

17. I am a student and settle in another country of the European Union to continue my studies. I wish to obtain my driving licence. Where should I apply?

Directive 91/439/EEC lays down an *optional arrangement* for students who go to study in another state. They can apply either to their country of normal residence, or to their country of origin.

Article 9 of Directive 91/439/EEC defines normal residence. It is noted that "normal residence", means the place where a person usually lives, that is for at least 185 days in each calendar year, because of personal and occupational ties, or, in the case of a person with no occupational ties, because of personal ties, which show close links between that person and the place where he is living.

Attendance at a university or school shall not imply transfer of normal residence.

However, Article 7(1)(b) of Directive 91/439/EEC stipulates that the issue of a driving licence is subject to applicants having their normal residence in the territory of the Member State issuing the licence or being in a position to produce evidence that they have been studying there for a period of at least six months.

In this case, students who wish to obtain a driving licence can apply either to the authorities of the state of origin or to those of the host country.

18. I wish to obtain a category B licence, what medical requirements do I have to satisfy?

Annex III of Directive 91/439/EEC on driving licences sets the minimum standards of physical and mental fitness for driving a power-driven vehicle. It is envisaged that applicants for a B licence have to undergo a medical examination if it becomes apparent, when the necessary formalities are being completed, or during the tests which they are required to undergo prior to obtaining a licence, that they have one or more of the medical disabilities mentioned in the annex (such as hearing, cardio-vascular disease, sugar diabetes, neurological disease, etc.).

You may also refer to section PRINCIPLES - "[Prerogatives of the Member state of residence](#)" for further details, more particularly on the distinction made between Group I and Group II.

19. I want to become a bus driver; what medical requirements do I have to satisfy?

In such a case applicants belong to Group 2 according to the classification established by directive 91/439/EEC. They must always undergo a medical examination before a driving licence is first issued and, thereafter, must undergo such periodic examinations as may be prescribed by national legislation.

You may also consult section PRINCIPLES - "[Prerogatives of the Member state of residence](#)" for further details, more particular on the classification made between Group I and Group II.

20. How is the driving test conducted?

The way in which the driving test is conducted is described in Annex II of Directive 91/439/EEC. The test is conducted in two stages. The first consists in testing the theoretical knowledge of the candidate. The second consists of a practical test during which the candidate's fitness to drive and his behaviour in traffic will be evaluated.

21. Is it possible to have two driving licences issued by different Member States?

Article 7(5) Directive 91/439/EEC clearly stipulates that no person may hold a driving licence from more than one Member State. This includes withdrawn licences.

22. My licence is about to expire; where do I have to apply for renewal?

You have to renew it before expiry by applying to the competent authorities of the state in which you have your normal residence.

23. I am from the Netherlands and have a limited-duration licence of category B. I am moving to France where such driving licences are issued for an unlimited period. My Dutch licence is about to expire. What will be the period of validity of my new driving licence?

In order to renew your driving licence, you have to apply to the authorities of the state where you have your normal residence. These will then issue you with a national driving licence with all its specific features. In this example, when his licence expires, the Dutch citizen will have to apply to the French authorities. He will consequently obtain a French licence with an unlimited validity.

24. I am Belgian holding a licence with an unlimited validity. I am establishing my normal residence in the Netherlands. Will the validity of my driving licence become limited?

Directive 91/439/EEC provides for the application of the relevant national provisions. In the Netherlands the period of validity of driving licences is 10 years. The change of normal residence will therefore have effect on the period of validity of the Belgian licence. The validity will henceforth be 10 years as from the day of taking up residence in The Netherlands. After this period of ten years, the Belgian licence will have to be exchanged for a Netherlands licence with the same period of validity applicable to all citizens having their normal residence in the Netherlands.

25. Having established my normal residence in another Member State, can I renew the driving licence in my country of origin?

No, in such case it is not possible to apply to the country of origin for the renewal of a driving licence. You must address the authorities of the country of normal residence. It is not possible to choose between the two states for the renewal of the licence.

26. Do I have to undergo a medical examination to renew my licence when it expires?

When the driving licence expires and has to be exchanged a medical certificate may be required. This requirement differs according to the Member State. You are therefore advised to contact national authorities of the country of residence.

27. When renewing in another Member State, do I have to produce a translation of my driving licence?

No, it is not necessary to provide a translation of your driving licence in the event of renewal in another Member State. Directive 91/439/EEC stipulates that the Member State effecting the exchange has to examine whether the licence submitted is still valid. It is, therefore, the host Member State's responsibility. However, Member States are bound to provide mutual assistance in the application of the directive and, where necessary, exchange information.

28. When renewing, do I retain my acquired rights?

As a principle, acquired rights are retained when a licence is renewed. [Commission Decision 2008/766/EC](#) of 25 August 2008 on equivalences between the various categories of driving licence confirms this principle. However, national provisions do continue to apply in certain fields, such as medical examinations. You are advised to consult the national authorities.

Theft or loss of a driving licences

[▲top](#)

29. You already hold a driving licence issued by a Member State, but you lose it or it is stolen.

Directive 91/439/EEC foresees this case in its Article 8(5) that a replacement for a driving licence following loss or theft may be obtained from the competent authorities of the State in which the holder has his normal residence; those authorities provide the replacement on the basis of the information in their possession or, where appropriate, proof from the competent authorities of the Member State which issued the original licence.

A distinction must be made between **two different situations**:

- You have established your normal residence in the state which issued the licence. In this case, you may ask for a duplicate of your original licence.
- You are resident in an EU- or EEA-Member State other than the state which issued the licence. In this case, you may not ask for a duplicate of your original licence. The Member State of normal residence issues a new licence on the basis of the information in its possession.

Withdrawal, cancellation and suspension of driving licences

[▲top](#)

30. Your driving licence is withdrawn in the country of residence

If the country of normal residence is different from the issuing state, the effects of the sanction are identical. The administrative and criminal laws of the country of residence are fully applicable. The document remains withdrawn (or, respectively, a restriction is recorded on it).

31. Your driving licence is withdrawn in a state other than the state of residence.

In this case, the decision of the Member State applies only with effect for its own territory. When the citizen leaves the country which imposed the sanction the authorities are bound to return the document to him.

Minimum ages

[▲top](#)

32. Are there any derogations from the age limit of 18 years for driving a category B vehicle?

Article 6(2) of Directive 91/439/EEC envisages this possibility. Member States may grant exemptions and issue driving licences from the age of 17 years.

33. Are category B licences issued to holders under 18 recognised by other Member States?

Article 6(3) of Directive 91/439/EEC stipulates that Member States may refuse to recognise the validity in their territory of such licences issued to drivers under 18 years of age.

34. You have a driving licence issued by a country located outside the European Union.

Member States are not obliged to recognise such a licence, even if it has already been recognised by one of them. It is necessary to contact the competent national authority in order to determine whether the licence is recognized.

35. You hold an international driving licence.

Member States are not obliged to recognise such a licence, even if it has already been recognised by one of them. It is necessary to contact the competent national authority in order to determine whether the licence is recognized.

The validity of this licence within the EU depends on the possession of a valid domestic driving licence for the State which issued the international driving licence. Both have to be valid.